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By *ADAM FITZ-ADAM.*

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OF all the improvements in polite converſation, I know of nothing that is half ſo entertaining and ſignificant as the *double entendre*. It is a figure in rhetoric, which owes it's birth, as well as it's name, to our inventive neighbours the French; and is that happy art, by which perſons of faſhion may communicate the looſeſt ideas under the moſt innocent expreſſions. The ladies have adopted it for the beſt reaſon in the world: they have long ſince diſcovered that the preſent faſhionable diſplay of their Perſons is by no means a ſufficient hint to the men that they mean any thing more than

than to attract their admiration: the *double entendre* diſplays the Mind in an equal degree, and tells us from what motives the lure of beauty is thrown out. It is an explanatory note to a doubtful text, which renders the meaning ſo obvious, that even the dulleſt reader cannot poſſibly miſtake it. For though the *double entendre* may ſometimes admit of a moral interpretation, as well as a wanton one, it is never intended to be underſtood but one way; and he muſt be a ſimple fellow indeed, and totally unacquainted with *good company*, who does not take it as it was meant.

But it is one thing to invite the attacks of men, and another to yield to them; and it is by no means a neceſſary implication, that becauſe a lady chuſes to dreſs and talk like a woman of the town, ſhe muſt needs act like one. I will be bold to aſſert that the contrary happens at leaſt ten or a dozen times within the ſpace of a twelvemonth; nay, I am almoſt enclined to believe, that when an enterpriſing young fellow, who, from a lady's diſplaying her beauties in public to the utmoſt exceſs of the mode, and ſuiting her language to her dreſs, is apt to fancy himſelf ſure of her at a *tête à tête*, it is not above four to one but he may meet with a repulſe. Thoſe liberties indeed, which are attended with no ruinous contingences, he may reaſonably claim, and expect always to be indulged in; as the refuſal of them would argue the higheſt degree of prudery, a foible, which in this age of nature and freedom, the utmoſt malice of the world cannot lay to the charge of a woman of condition: but it does not abſolutely follow that becauſe ſhe is good-humoured enough to grant every liberty but one, ſhe muſt refuſe nothing.

It may poſſibly be objected, that there is neither good-breeding nor generoſity in a lady's inviting a man to a feaſt, when ſhe only means to treat him with the garniſh: but ſhe is certainly miſtreſs of her own entertainment, and has a right to keep thoſe ſubſtantials under cover, which ſhe has no mind he ſhould help himſelf to. A hungry glutton may (as the phraſe is) eat her out of houſe and home; and if he will not be ſatisfied with whips and creams, he may carry his voraciouſneſs to more liberal tables. A young lady of œconomy will admit no ſuch perſons to her entertainments; they are a ſet of robuſt unmannerly creatures, who are perpetually intruding themſelves upon the hoſpitable and the generous, and tempting them to thoſe coſtly treats, that have in the end undone them, and compelled them ever after to keep ordinaries for their ſupport.

From this conſideration, it were heartily to be wiſhed that the ladies could be prevailed upon to give fewer invitations in public places; ſince the moſt frugal of them cannot always anſwer for her own œconomy: and it is well known that the profuſion of one ſingle entertainment has compelled many a beautiful young creature to hide herſelf from the world for whole months after. As for married ladies indeed, who have huſbands to bear the burden of ſuch entertainments, and rich widows who can afford them, ſomething may be ſaid; but while gluttons may be feaſted liberally at ſuch tables, and while there are public ordinaries in almoſt every pariſh of this metropolis, a ſingle lady may beg to be excuſed.

But to return particularly to my ſubject. The *double entendre* is at preſent ſo much the taſte of all genteel companies, that there is no poſſibility either of being po-

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lite or entertaining without it. That it is eaſily learnt is the happy advantage of it; for as it requires little more than a mind well ſtored with the moſt natural ideas, every young lady of fifteen may be thoroughly inſtructed in the rudiments of it from her book of novels, or her waiting-maid. But to be as knowing as her mamma in all the refinements of the art, ſhe muſt keep the very beſt company, and frequently receive leſſons in private from a male inſtructor. She ſhould alſo be careful to minute down in her pocket-book the moſt ſhining *ſentiments* that are toaſted at table; that when her own is called for, ſhe may not be put to the bluſh from having nothing to ſay that would occaſion a modeſt woman to bluſh for her. Of all the modern inventions to enliven converſation, and promote freedom between the ſexes, I know of nothing that can compare with theſe *ſentiments*; and I may venture to affirm, without the leaſt flattery to the ladies, that they are by no means inferior to the men in the happy talent of conveying the archeſt ideas imaginable in the moſt harmleſs words, and of enforcing thoſe ideas by the moſt ſignificant looks.

THERE is indeed one inconvenience attending the *double entendre*, which I do not remember to have heard taken notice of. This inconvenience is the untoward effect that it is apt to have upon certain diſcreet gentlewomen, who paſs under the denomination of old maids. As theſe grave perſonages are generally remarked to have the quickeſt conceptions, and as they have once been ſhocked by what they call the indelicacy of this figure, they are ever afterwards carrying it in their minds, and converting every thing they hear into wantonneſs and indecency. To aſk them what o'clock it is, may be an enſnaring queſtion; to pull off your gloves in their preſence is beginning to undreſs

undreſs; to make them a bow may be ſtooping for an immodeſt purpoſe, and to talk of bed-time is too groſs to be endured. I have known one of theſe ladies to be ſo extremely upon her guard, that having dropt her gold watch-caſe in a public walk, and being queſtioned by a gentleman who took it up, whether it was her's or not, was ſo alarmed at the indecency of throwing aſide her apron to examine, that ſhe flew from him with precipitation, ſuffering him to put it into his pocket, and go fairly off with it.

THIS *falſe modeſty*, which moſt evidently owes it's birth to the *double entendre*, is a degree of impudence that the other cannot match. The poſſeſſors of it have unfortunately diſcovered that the moſt immodeſt meanings may be couched under very innocent expreſſions; and having been once put into a looſe train of thinking, they are perpetually revolving in their minds every groſs idea that words can be made to imply. They would not pronounce the names of certain perſons of their acquaintance for the whole world, and are almoſt ſhocked to death at the ſight of a woman with child, as it ſuggeſts to their minds every idea of ſenſuality.

IT will doubtleſs be very aſtoniſhing to the reader to be told, that even the purity of my own writings has not at all times exempted me from the cenſure of theſe maiden gentlewomen. The Nankin breeches of poor Patrick the footman, in number 130 of theſe papers, have given inconceivable offence. The word breeches, it ſeems, is ſo outrageouſly indecent, that a modeſt woman cannot bring herſelf to pronounce it, even when alone. I muſt therefore in all future impreſſions of this work, either diſmiſs the ſaid Patrick from his ſervice, or direct him to wait upon his ladies without any breeches at all.

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